Montana Outdoors

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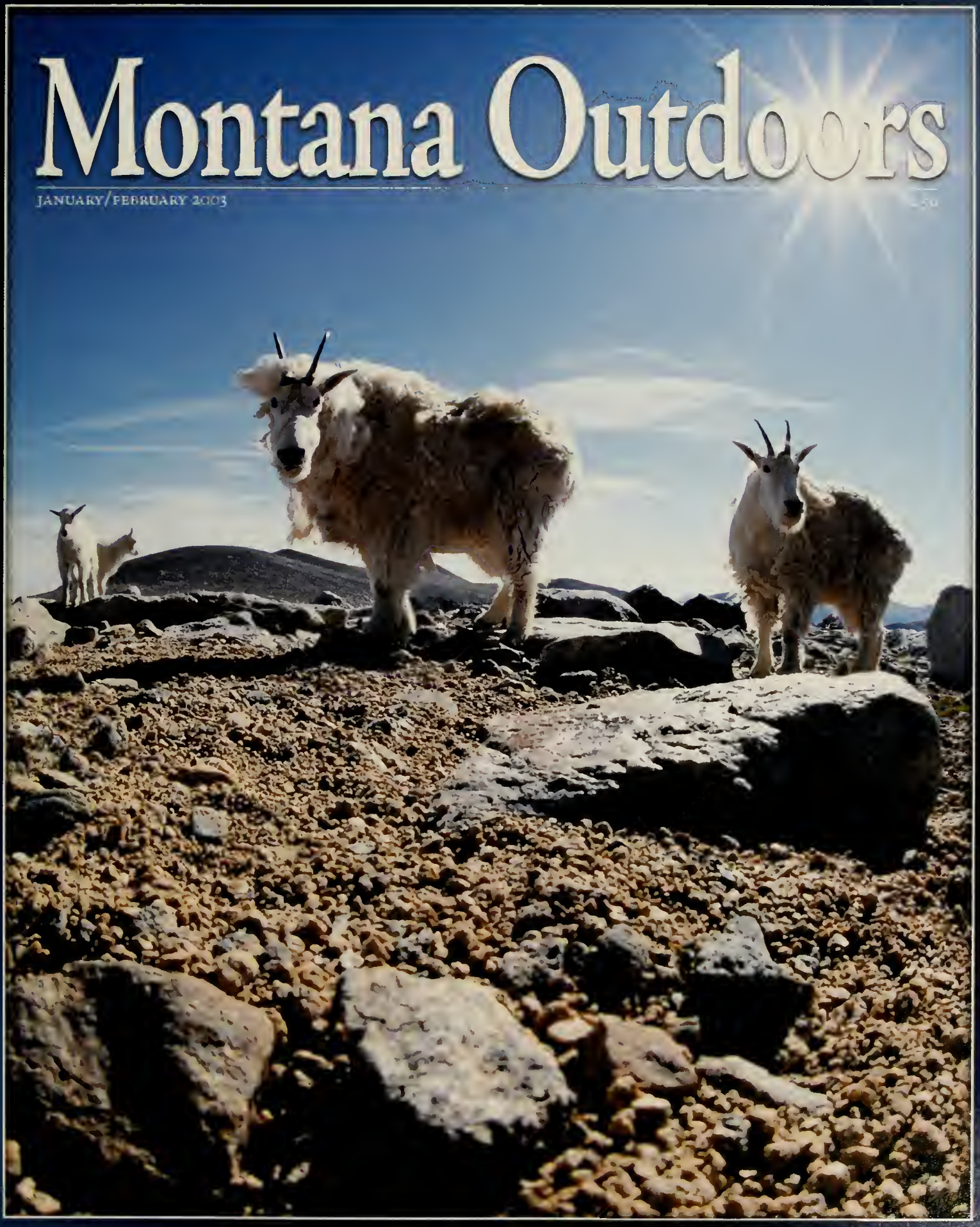

2003 Annual Photography Issue

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LEFT: **BILL PRIEST** perched on a bridge to catch these Yellowstone cutthroat trout suspended over thick aquatic vegetation.

INSET: While in the Beaverhead National Forest, **PATRICK TOALSON** watched as osprey fed their young with trout taken from nearby Cliff Lake.

Michael S. Quinton used a remote control camera to capture this image of a northern flicker carrying its meal through an aspen stand at Wade Lake, near West Yellowstone. "Lately I've been pursuing images that show things people can't ordinarily see with their eyes," he says.

"I believe there are things nobody would see if I didn't photograph them," wrote the renowned photographer Diane Arbus, in reference to her famous portraits of unusual human subjects. That same idea was behind this year's photo issue, our 22nd. Traditionally, the issue showcases the beauty and grandeur of Montana's landscapes, parks, flora, and fauna. This year we also wanted to present outdoor images taken in a different light or from a unique angle, images that offer new ways of looking at the state's outdoors. We asked our photographers to send "seldom-seen perspectives of Montana nature," to show us things that nobody would see if they hadn't photographed them.

As usual for this issue, the response was overwhelming. What struck us most about the roughly 2,600 slides we received, beyond the sheer number of submissions and the technical expertise they all displayed, was the wide diversity of viewpoints. The photographers sent everything from leaf studies and closeups of newborn animals, to mountain range panoramas and portraits of billion-year-old bedrock. Also striking was the range of artistic expression—the use of color, composition, and movement to call attention to particular aspects of nature. The images show how photographers continue to seek and find exciting new ways to portray the state's outdoors.

"When subject matter is forced to fit into preconceived patterns, there can be no freshness of vision," wrote the great western landscape photographer Edward Weston. We think you'll find in this issue that fresh visions abound.

—*Editor*

While shooting golden mantle squirrels on a rock slide in Glacier National Park, **Tim Christie** set up a separate remote control camera so he could catch himself and his subject matter sizing each other up.

Above: While hiking along upper Bighorn Lake in early spring, **George Robbins** looked down to see patterns formed by ice sheets about to break apart on the water below. "It was such a beautiful sight, and the light at that moment was absolutely perfect," he says.

Right: **Alan G. Nelson** was using birdseed to lure pine grosbeaks closer to his camera when two began fighting over a tree perch. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime shot," he says of this image of the combatants.

Above: **John McNeal** says he'll drop whatever he is doing to photograph the northern lights. He caught this eerily green aurora borealis behind Pompeys Pillar, along with stars passing overhead, using an eight-minute exposure. Adds McNeal, "That light you see reflected on the rock is the moon."

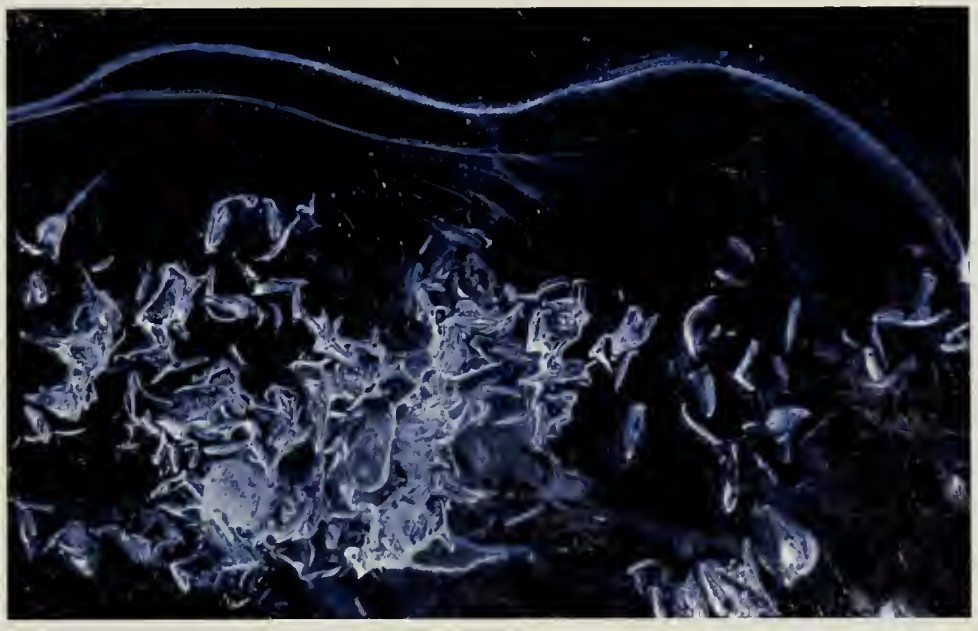
Below: For years **Chuck Haney** tried unsuccessfully to photograph Missouri Headwaters State Park from the ground. It got easier the day he rented an airplane. "Everything just came together that morning, with the fog coming off the water and the lighting just right," he says.

Above: **John McNeal** saw a storm forming to the south from his home in Billings and hurriedly set up his tripod. Though it appears this lightning hit the tree in the foreground, McNeal says that in fact the tree was next to his house, while the bolt was in the distance roughly two miles away.

Above: **Bob Schillereff** noticed this hen mallard urging her young to travel a little faster as she skimmed across the water. "Those poor ducklings couldn't fly," he says, "but you could tell Mom wanted them to move it."

Left: **Randy Smith** shot these two cinnamon teal from a fixed blind along the shores of a federal waterfowl production area off State Highway 200. "If you can get into your blind before daylight," he says, "you can have ducks come practically right up to you."

Background: "What strikes me about the duck's spectrum, or back of the wing, are the incredibly iridescent colors and the beautiful graphics and forms," says **Denver Bryan**, who photographed this closeup of a northern pintail drake wing in his home using a macro lens and studio lights aimed from two directions.



Above: "Everywhete I looked there were these incredible abstract images," says **Kevin Brooke** of a morning in late winter when, while cross-country skiing in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, he took this shot of newly frozen Lake Fork of Rock Creek.

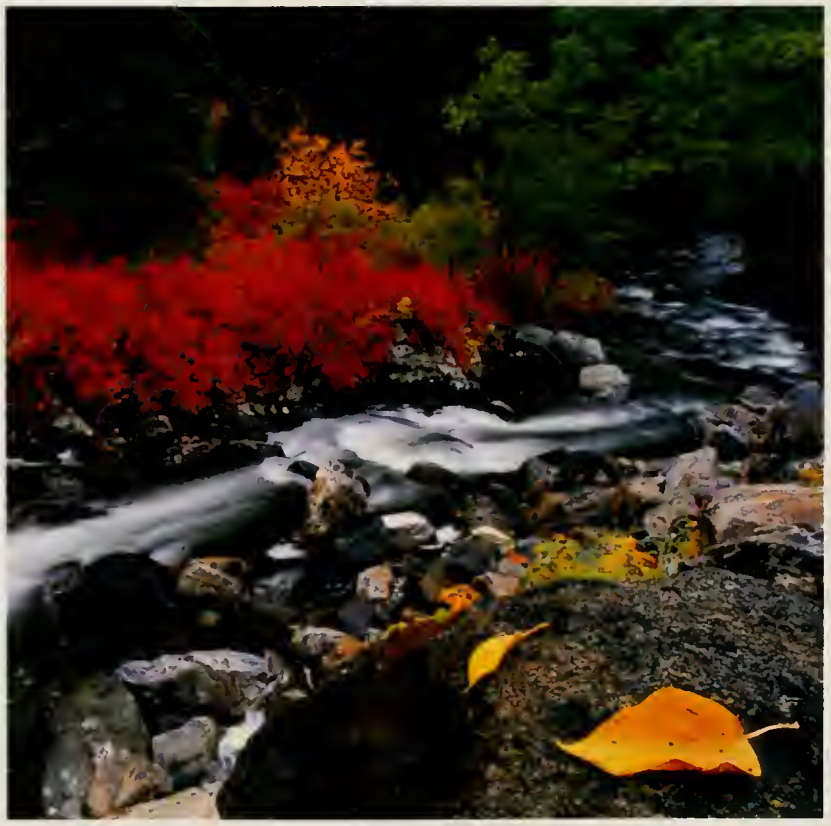
Left: Fishing guide **Liz Lewis** snapped this view of the Yellowstone River from the Carter's Bridge Fishing Access Site south of Livingston. "I thought the river looked great choked up with ice," she says, "and I wanted to show it to my summer clients so they could see what the Yellowstone looks like in winter."

Left inset: **Ron Boggs** tan outside his house after a freak early-summer hailstorm to find grape-sized hailstones still rolling off his roof. "They were covering small-leaf pussytoes on the ground," he says, "and I knew it was an image I'd never see again."

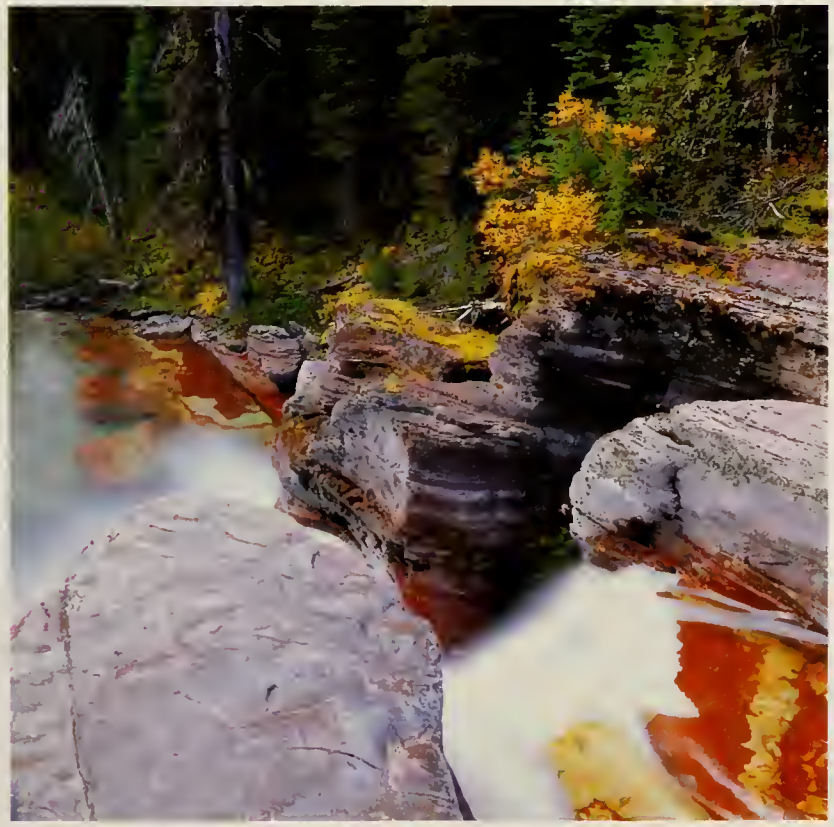
Below: While hiking along the Bitterroot River in winter, **Michael J. Wolf** noticed that a fallen leaf had absorbed enough heat from the sun to melt its way through the ice near shore.

During a backpacking trip across the Beartooth Plateau, **Matt Long** and his companions spent a night at Jasper Lake, where he took this shot as the sun dropped beneath the horizon. "It was like the Arctic up there," he says. "The lake still had a crust of ice, but it was in the middle of the summer."

Bob Kurzenhauser says he got soaked this rainy fall afternoon at Hyalite Creek, near Bozeman, while looking for images to shoot. "I like to do the near-far thing, with something interesting both in the foreground and the background."



It was the combination of red argillite bedrock, rushing water, and dark green forest that attracted **John Lambing** to this particular scene of Deadwood Falls in Glacier National Park.



David R. Bennett rose early to catch the soft light illuminating a lush carpet of ferns beneath western red cedars in the Yaak Valley of northwestern Montana. "It was like a fairyland in there that morning," he says.

Diane Ensign captured these shooting stars in a Bridger Mountains alpine meadow.

While in the Big Belt Mountains, **Steven Akre** focused his attention on these wild iris blossoms.

Cynthia A. Delaney caught a rainbow illuminating a burned area near the Inside North Fork Road in Glacier National Park.

Two years after the 2000 fire, **Nelson Kenter** hiked through an intensely burned portion of the Bitterroot National Forest and was surprised to see only two living plant species: beargrass and these lupine. "Other places in the burn were lush with grass," he says, "but this one spot had been a real hot area, and only a few plants were growing."

Above: **Carol Polich** says getting close to fluttering creatures such as dragonflies requires hours of stalking. "It's not like you just see one and go over and take its picture."

Right: On a recent trip to Glacier National Park, **Daniel J. Cox** was struck by the contrast in colors between Clements Mountain, warmly lit by the morning sun, and the chilly alpine creek tumbling over boulders below.

"I was up shooting these hoary marmots in Glacier [National Park] several times a week for an entire summer," says **Tom J. Ulrich**. "It got so they pretty much accepted me as one of them." He was just 3 inches away when he took this picture of a marmot comrade gazing toward Bearhat Mountain.

Above: **Jim Heustess** says he caught these two red fox kits trading kisses near the driving range at the Missoula Country Club.

Right: While inspecting a bluebird house along State Highway 200, **Kristi DuBois** heard some very un-avian squeaking inside. "I tapped on the box and this adult deer mouse peered out," she says. "I guess the squeaking was from her young."

Michael J. Wolf was in Glacier National Park taking a photography seminar when he spied this mother mountain goat and her two kids on a ledge below him. "I only had a 200 mm lens, which was too big for how close they were," he says, "so I had to quick borrow another lens to get this shot."

Paul F. Updike weighted down his underwater camera housing with rocks and set it in a tributary of the Missouri River near Toston. "Then I went to the bank and hid," he says. When the rainbow trout, initially spooked by the commotion, eventually returned to the spawning site, Updike used a trip shutter to take this remarkable photograph. "With those rainbows spawning in that shallow, crystal clear water, it looked like Alaska.

Dale C. Spartas sighted down an old barbed wire fence near Three Forks to capture this image of a lone mourning dove. "I liked the colors of the sage in the background and seeing that dove sitting by itself on the wire," he says.

Gary Kramer says he approached to within 20 feet of this male blue grouse displaying on a ridge in the Beaverhead National Forest. "Sometimes they are so intent on finding a mate that you can creep up to within just a few feet of them."

Al Troth says he sometimes sits for hours in a blind at Poindexter Slough, near Dillon, before seeing a worthwhile image, like this yellow-headed blackbird perched on a cattail stalk.

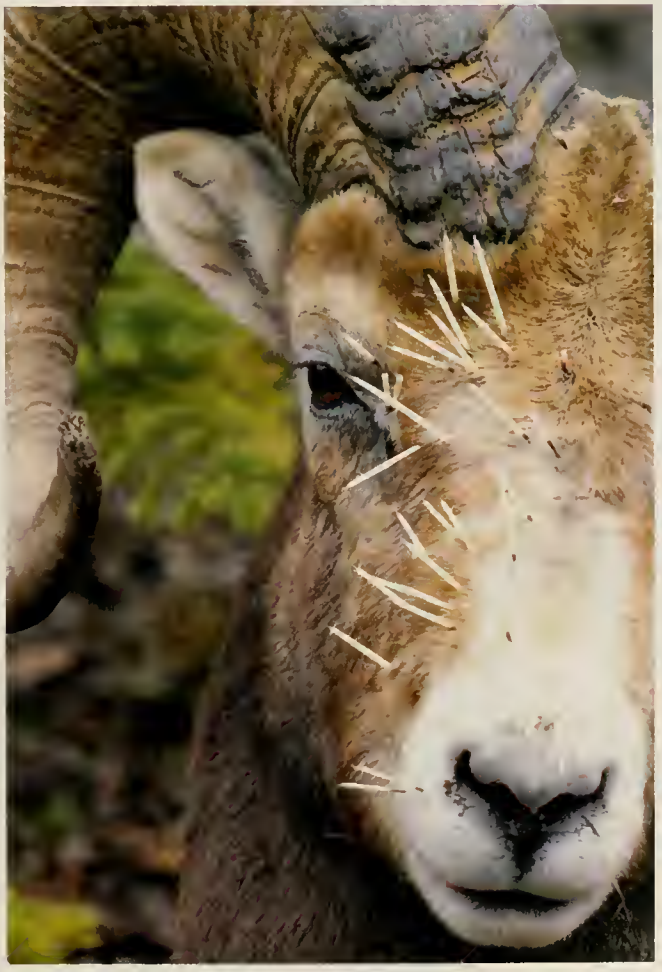
Mark and Jennifer Miller were taken by how the morning mist slightly obscured this pair of trumpeter swans, casting the stately birds in a soft, mystical light.

"I think wild turkeys are about the most beautiful bird there is," says **D. Toby Thompson**, who photographed these two rival gobblers sounding off near Bigfork.

Craig and Liz Larcom shot these newly hatched American robin chicks at a Montana FWP fishing access site along the Missouri River near Great Falls.

"I was really lucky to get this shot," says **Bert Gildart**. "We were in Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, and the antelope we were watching seemed real accustomed to people, so we could get quite close. I took this shot with a 600 mm lens and then panned with about a 1/30th-second exposure to get this blutred, streaking effect."

Above: One winter day in Gardiner, **Denver Bryan** was startled to see this big bull elk sparring with a sapling in a small front yard. "These elk migrate in from Yellowstone Park, so they're used to people," he says. "But for some reason this guy was pretty aggressive and came right at me. Fortunately there was a fence between us."



Right: **Donald M. Jones** has no idea how this bighorn ram ended up with porcupine quills on one side of its face—and its front knee. "Maybe it was grazing and bumped a sleeping porcupine hidden in the brush," he says. "The thing is, it seemed to be just fine and was feeding with some other rams as though nothing was wrong."

Above: **Phil Farnes** captured a fiery sunset over Flathead Lake from Wayfayers Campground near Bigfork.

Left: **Al Troth** had been watching a sandhill crane nest at Poindexter Slough, near Dillon, for 13 consecutive days before the egg hatched and he was able to catch the chick trying out its wobbly legs.

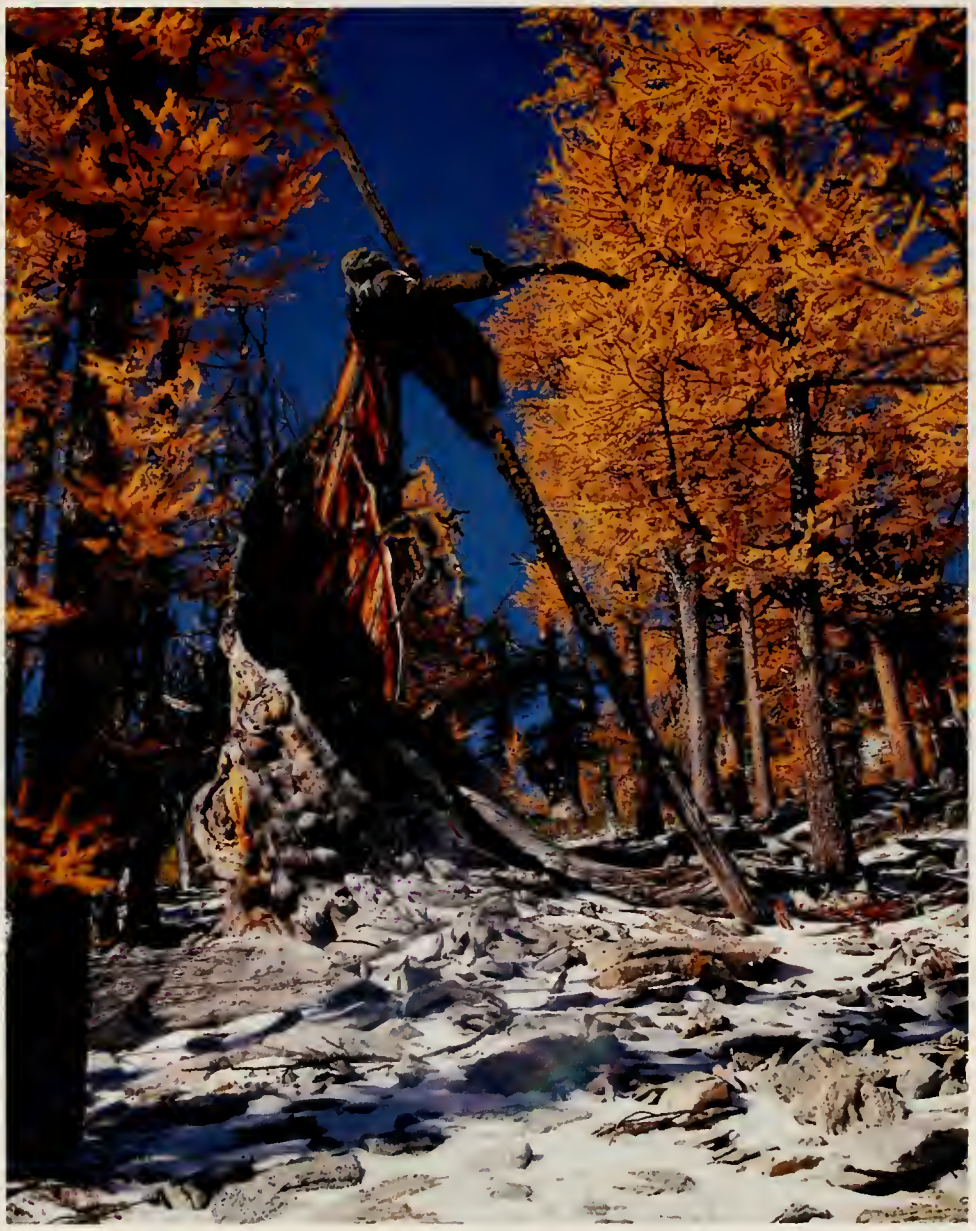
Right: **Tim Egan** says a disintegrating cattail stalk caught his eye one winter day while he was visiting a Montana FWP fishing access site on the Missouri River south of Townsend.

Daniel J. Cox slowed his shutter speed and then moved his camera while tripping the shutter to capture the power and grace of two bull elk sparring in the foothills of the Bridger Mountains.

While driving through the National Bison Range Wildlife Refuge, near Moiese, **Norman Jacobson** noticed a mule deer buck staring intently at several does. "I was lucky that he moved right in front of those great fall colors so I could get that good contrast," he says.

While hiking along the Rocky Mountain Front, **Mike Barlow** saw a mule deer doe bounding away. Walking closer, he spied a day-old fawn. "I carefully crept near and quickly took this shot before continuing on my way," he says.

"I don't really know what they were doing," says **Dale C. Spartas** of these animated cow elk near West Yellowstone. "Honestly, I think they were just playing, like you'd see dogs play with each other."

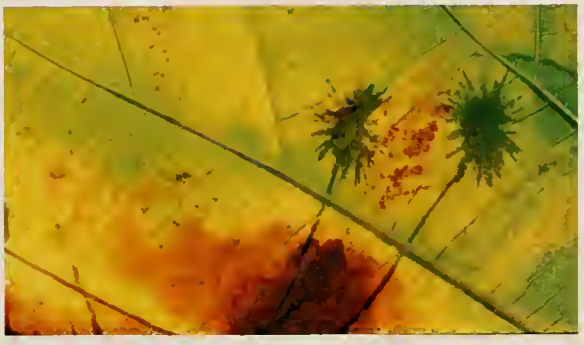


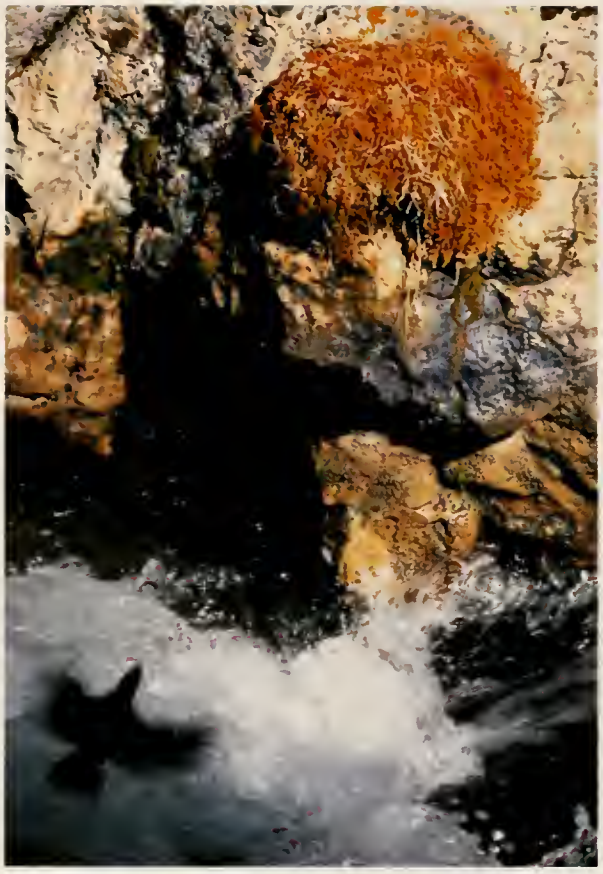
Above: **Mark S. Lagerstrom** says he likes to hike in the mountains and photograph old dead trees. He shot this twisted relic among subalpine larches on Beaverhead Mountain.

Right top: **John Lambing** was disappointed to arrive at Seeley Lake and find all the trees bare. Then, walking back to his car, he spied fallen poplar leaves pooled in a small inlet. "It was the last bit of color around," he says.

Right center: Great photos don't need to come from spectacular settings, says **Dea Vogel**, who took this shot of quaking aspen leaves in her Missoula backyard. "Lately I've been focusing on looking at nature up close right here in town."

Right bottom: **Tim Egan** was photographing arrowleaf balsamroot leaves north of Bozeman when he saw an especially interesting one with aster silhouettes showing through.





Left: "I knew it was a good shot when I took it," says **Ron Boggs** of this photograph of an American dipper flying to its nest perched over Beaver Creek, near York. Though it appears to be a shadow, the image is of the bird itself, silhouetted against the bright, roiling water below.

Below: A few days before he saw these ducks taking flight from a pond in Missoula, **G. Allen Hay** had taken a class at the nearby Rocky Mountain School of Photography on how to create impressionistic images. "I immediately threw my camera up and twisted the zoom while panning from left to right, like they'd taught us, and it came out just great," he says.

Above: While at Freezeout Lake shooting shorebirds, **Donald M. Jones** noticed flights of male American avocets repeatedly taking off and landing again. "I intentionally took this shot of those birds with a slow shutter speed to get this blurred image," he says.

Right: It can take hours of sitting and waiting, says **Richard Mousel**, before birds move close enough to his blind for a decent shot—even when using a telephoto lens. These mallards, on a pond near Freezeout Lake, came within 20 feet before launching into flight.

Left: "We saw this ermine right outside our house," says **Cindy Hartman**, who took this shot with her husband, **Dan**. "For a few days we could see it hunting mice and voles near our woodpile, bounding and diving. Then one day it was gone."

Below: Photographers **Craig and Liz Larcom** pose differing theories to explain this snow mystery they shot in their front yard near Great Falls. Craig thinks it shows the trail of a pheasant or sharptail walking before taking off in flight. Liz thinks it was a rabbit walking before being grabbed by a hawk. Says Craig: "Unfortunately, the snow was so powdery we couldn't see any tracks other than the wing marks."

Left: It was 15 degrees below zero when **Rodney Schlecht** came across this magical winter setting at Giant Springs State Park. "On really cold days the warm, humid air from the springs creates a frost on everything nearby," he says. "I shot this into the partially blocked sun to really highlight the frost on the trees."

Below: Photographer **Bill Carter** noticed how the sun, setting behind a stand of lodgepole pines, created lyrical shadow patterns across a midwinter snow field.

Above: "I just love eastern Montana," says **Bert Gildart** of Bigfork. He frequently visits Makoshika State Park, where a variety of weather-sculpted landforms, including "table tops," catch his eye. "Sedimentation provides the groundwork, and time provides the art," Gildart says.

Right: He'd never seen anything like it in his life, says **Gary Leppart** of these druzy quartz crystals in a petrified wood cavity in the Terry Badlands of eastern Montana.

Right inset: **Gary Leppart** was invited by a private landowner to view these ancient pictographs below a sandstone ledge a few miles northwest of Billings. "They are remarkably preserved," he says.

Young great gray owls haven't fully developed their adult feathers when they leave the nest, accounting for their goofy, monkey-like appearance. "They also can't fly well at this stage, so they just sit out on branches calling for their parents to bring them food," says **Donald M. Jones**, who shot this youngster atop a lodgepole pine in the Yaak Valley.

Neal and MJ Mishler crept to within 15 feet of this pygmy owl perched on a wild rose before tripping the shutter. They were on the nature trail at the National Bison Range Wildlife Refuge, near Moiese.

W. Steve Sherman says he locates great gray owls at night in February when the large birds are establishing their nesting territory. "I listen for their distinctive hooting and then go back to that spot during the day and look for their nests." He positions himself between a nest and a nearby meadow, where the adults capture voles to feed their young. He saw this adult great gray owl perched on an uprooted tree in a Pioneer Mountains meadow. "As he flew off, I took two or three quick shots, and I happened to catch him with both eyes open looking right at me."

Parting shot

Above: Last spring while hiking with her parents (photographers Dan and Cindy Hartman) near their home in Silver Gate, 10-year-old **Cassie Hartman** spied this elk skeleton pinned beneath a fallen tree. Looking closer, the family found where a branch spike on the tree appeared to have impaled the animal's vertebra.

"I had my camera and tripod with me," says Cassie, "and I thought it might be a good picture." After circling the scene to find the right angle and lighting, she decided on this composition. At first glance it appears to be just antlers among flowers, but a closer look reveals the tree, inviting speculation: Did it actually kill the bull, and, if so, what are the odds of something like that occurring? Or did the bull die of another cause, and then the tree fell later on the carcass?

"I'm pretty sure the tree landed on the elk and killed it," says Cassie. "That's why I thought this was such an interesting picture."

Cover: Several summers ago while climbing Granite Peak, the state's highest point, **Darren Joe Irons** and his friends were regularly inspected by a group of curious, shaggy mountain goats. "Eventually they got real close to us, and I was able to get this shot with a 15 mm wide-angle lens," he says.

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